



DATCP Offers Services for Minority Farmers

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MADISON – Wisconsin farmers are as diverse as the products they grow. They come from different backgrounds, farm in different ways and in some cases come from different countries. That’s why the Wisconsin Farm Center of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) offers the Minority Farmer Outreach and Assistance Program.

Jack Chang recently joined the Wisconsin Farm Center staff as a full-time Senior Ag Program Specialist, working primarily with minority farmers.

“When a minority farmer calls the Wisconsin Farm Center toll-free helpline, I can take the phone call directly, learn about the situation first hand and either offer assistance or make a referral,” said Chang.

While Chang works with minorities from all ethnic backgrounds, he can be especially helpful to Wisconsin’s large Hmong agricultural community. Chang grew up working the farm with his parents both in Laos and once they moved here to Wisconsin.

“I am a public resource and try to minimize the language and cultural barrier that can exist with Hmong farmers,” explained Chang.

Chang’s work includes facilitating educational workshops that target minority farmers with a primary focus on risk management issues, such as food safety and financial literacy. Workshops are held across the state in areas of large minority farmer populations, including La Crosse, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Fox Cities, Wausau, Madison, and Milwaukee. The workshops are a free resource for minority farmers.

But if needed, Chang can go out to the farm to meet directly with the farmer and offer one-on-one assistance.

“Many minority farmers have little knowledge of cash flow, cost of production or how to make a profit when the price of gas and labor continue to rise,” added Chang. “By knowing what the farmer has invested in the production, the end product can be priced accurately.”

Many minority farmers grow vegetables, herbs and flowers to sell through a direct market. A majority of these farmers are renting a small amount of farmland to grow their fresh products and need a solid lease agreement. Chang also assists minority farmers when they want to purchase a farm of their own. He can walk the farmer through the procedure, advising them on what questions to ask and how to complete a fair sale.

Chang sees more minority farmers starting to see farming as a profitable enterprise instead of just a way to feed their families. And with the younger generation showing interest in the business, parents are able to share their knowledge and skills of farming with their children in the fields or at the farmers market.

Chang sees himself as a bridge connecting minority farmers with resources needed to solve a problem. DATCP works in collaboration with a large network of government agencies, agricultural organizations and farmers. By working together, everyone can be more effective.

“If you have a minority client or customer looking for information or assistance, I am here as a reference,” concluded Chang.

Contact DATCP’s Jack Chang at 608-224-5050 or jack.chang@wisconsin.gov. The Wisconsin Farm Center toll-free helpline is available at 1-800-942-2474 on weekdays from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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